

THE  
VVAY TO  
A BLESSED  
ESTATE IN  
THIS LIFE.

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BY  
EZEKEL CVLVERVELL.

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L O N D O N

Printed by *John Dawson*, for  
*William Sheffard*, and are to be sold  
at his Shop, at the entring in of  
*Popes-head Alley* out of *Lincolns-  
Inn-Street*. 1 6 2 3.

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**T**HAT which our  
Lord Iesus from  
Heaven writ vnto  
the Church of  
*Sardis; Thou hast*  
*a name that thou liuest, but art*  
*dead,* may be truly spoken of the  
greater sort of not-counterfeit  
Professors of the Faith in our  
time: for it is cleare by the Text,  
that this is not spoken of hypo-  
crites, who are starke dead, but

Rev. 3. 1.

Many drow  
the profes-  
sion.

of such who having some life remaining in them, are in a dead sleepe : for these of whom I speake, take good paines to keepe vp a name of Christianitie, both in the exercises of Religion, and in their outward behaviour. ( though in both there be much sayling, ) but in very truth there is but a little life of faith and loue in all their Profession, as may appeare in their cold and vncomfortable prayers, in their wandering and drowsie hearing of the Word, and vnfruitfull receiving of the Sacraments, and much more in their abuse and neglect of the secret exercises of Prayer, reading, and meditation by themselves, and conference with others, seldome deeply bewailing their estate, lesse reioicing in the assurance of their salvation by Christ, as seldome delighting in God, with a zeale to set forth his glory in every part of their

their life.

Though this be the state of the greater part of those that haue some truth of grace in them, yet may we say againe, that there are with vs, (as in the Church of *Sardis*) *a few names that haue not defiled their garments*, that is, doe liue vnrebukably, and walke worthy their holy calling, hauing a sweet feeling of Gods fauour vnto them, and so can boldly come vnto him in time of need, with assurance that he doth graciously respect them, their prayers, and vnfeigned obedience; who likewise doe more delight themselves in God, then in all earthly things, accounting it their greatest griefe to offend him, and greatest ioy to please him; possessing their soules with confidence and patience in their greatest trialls, looking for the appearing of Christ.

This is that blessed estate to be

**A few  
worthy.**

**What a  
bleſſed life  
here may  
be attained.**

**Deſired by  
many, not  
attained.**

**How this  
life is at-  
tained.**

enjoyed in this life, which God hath prepared, (though in diuers measures) for the faithfull, all which may well be contained in this short ſentence of the *Psalmiſt*. *Plaſ. 37. 4. Delight thy ſelfe in the Lord, and he will give thee thy hearts deſire*: which I doubt not but all true Chriſtians (when they haue well conſidered it) would be glad to attaine vnto: But either through ignorance of the way how to attaine it; or through negligence; not putting in practice what they know: they ſpend many yeares, either ſecurely, or vncomfortably, ſeldome attaining to that heavenly feaſting, which (if they were wiſe) might be their daily reſreſhing: whole eſtate I much tending, doe endeavour to ſhew them, how this happie life may be attained; which I conceiue to be onely by a more plentifull feeding vpon Chriſt by faith. It is without que-

question, that all and every part of our spirituall life is in Christ, of whose fulnesse we receiue grace for grace: and this is as cleare, that we receiue no grace first or last from Christ, but by beleeving: in which respect Christ is truly and principally said to be our spirituall food, and beleeving to be the true feeding vpon him. Which being so, it necessarily followes, that feeding seldome or weakely, we cannot haue much spirituall strength: and otherwise feeding plentifully and soundly, we shall be fat, and flourishing in grace, and so attaine vnto the blessed life spoken of.

Ioh. 1. 16.

Ioh. 6. 27.

35.

34.

For the better vnderstanding and practising whereof, this is specially to be considered, How every true beleeuer may daily, yea, oft in the day, by faith feed vpon Christ, that so he may receiue from him all spirituall nourishment, for his refreshing

How to  
feed oft in  
the day on  
Christ.

and strengthening to every good worke.

This is done by setting before vs those sweet promises, which God hath made to vs, for the strengthening of our faith in all our necessities: and, so particularly to apply them to our selues. Whereby we may comfortably assure our selues, that we shall enjoy that which God hath promised. Wherein we are first to get the true meaning of that which is promised.

Secondly, To see we haue a good warrant, that this is promised to vs, that therevpon we may conclude, we shall certainly enjoy that which God hath promised, seeing he is faithfull who hath promised.

Example

But seeing this is not well conceived by many, I will make it plaine by example. *I Cor. 1. 30.* it is said; *But of him are ye in Christ Iesus, who of God is made vnto vs wisdom, and righteousness,*

*nesse, and sanctification, and redemption.* In which is as much sayd as may be conceived, or desired; the meaning whereof is, that every true beleever, is by Gods spirit made a living member of Christ Iesus, from and in whom, he is made by God a true partaker of all things needfull to salvation: that whereas he is by nature foolish, guiltie, filthy, and in bondage, now in Christ he is made perfectly wise, righteous, holy, freed from all his enemies, and so restored to full happinesse. This promise of God being clearely vnderstood, must now be applyed particularly by every beleever to himselfe, thus: Seeing God who is all-sufficient, and faithfull, hath in his Word, which is Truth it selfe, promised these great benefits ( in which all are contained ) to every true beleever, therefore I who doe truly, though weakely, beleeue in Christ,

Christ, may boldly assure my selfe, that all these be mine, and therefore I shall not want any thing needfull for my present comfort, or eternall happinesse. Which whosoever doth daily practise in this manner to maintaine, and increase his faith by application of this, and all other of Gods promises, he shall daily more and more enjoy in this life that blessed estate we speake of.

Pray for  
faith.

But for as much as faith is the gift of God, and we cannot further beleue then wee be drawne by Gods spirit, therefore wee must ioyne often and fervent prayer, that God by this meanes would increase our faith.

Not easie.

This may seeme easie to be performed, but vpon better triall, it will not be found so easie to doe it effectually; for besides our owne great vntowardnesse to beleue, I cannot thinke  
of

of any dutie, wherein our common Adversary, will vse more cunning, and diligence to hinder vs, then in this: either by keeping vs from the worke, or beguiling vs in it: whereby it comes to passe, that very few doe ( to any good purpose ) practise the same.

Amongst many lettes which hinder the faithfull practise hereof, I obserue these two, in two diuers sorts of beleeuers. The former in those, who not sufficiently feeling their wants, and too much contented with their estate, doe not so prize Christ, and this blessed estate in him, as may moue them to take this paines, and therefore neuer reach vnto this growth in grace, wherevnto they might come, if the fault were not in themselves. The other let is in those who highly prizing the benefit, and earnestly labouring for it, are by the sense of their owne

Two chiefe  
lettis.

1. Not pri-  
zing *christ*.

2. Our vn-  
worthines.

vn-

vnworthinesse, so kept downe, that they cannot with any hope looke vp, for so great a blessing.

Remoue of  
the first let.

For the remooving of both these lettes, the first sort are to bethinke themselves, what an vncomfortable account it will be, when God shall call them to it, to see how many yeares they haue spent, with little growth in grace, either to the glory of God, or good example to others, or to the peace of their owne soules. Whereas on the other side, they might haue attained vnto such a sweet life, as would haue beene a heaven vpon earth; namely, *To reioyce alwayes in the Lord.*

Of the second let.

For the other poore soules, who are kept downe with the sense of their owne vnworthinesse, they are to know, that all Gods promises, are free and undeserved, so as no vnworthinesse ought to hinder them from believing.

leeving : yea, rather they that haue the most sennie of their owne vnworthinesse, haue most incouragement to beleue, for that voice of Christ, *Come vnto me all you that are weary and heauie laden,* and I will ease you, serues not onely for our first conversion, but in all our distresses whatsoeuer, throughout the whole course of our life.

If any escape both these lets, and goe about this worke, then will Satan vse all his skill to beguile both sorts : such as are weake and heauie hearted, soone discouraged, he tempts and perswades, they labour in vaine, and doe not beleue, when indeed they doe, as shall appeare. The other sort who are too well conceited, and light hearted, Satan labours to perswade, that they haue more faith then indeed they haue, and that their case is better then in truth it is.

Mat. 11.28.

Satan will  
beguile;

Some that  
they be-  
leue not;

Others,  
that they  
haue more  
faith then  
they haue.

It shall be therefore the wisdom of all who will not be deceived, carefully to examine and try themselves; which that they may the better doe, let them consider of these marks that follow: whereby either sort may certainly iudge of themselves.

Four  
marks of  
faith not  
seene.

1. Griefe  
for want of  
faith.
2. Constant  
labour for  
it.
3. True  
loue to  
God.

For such as conscionably endeavour to nourish their faith in such manner as hath beene shewed, and yet finde no comfort, but feare they doe not beleeue, (when as indeed they doe) these are to discerne their faith by such secret operations, as doe certainly shew faith to be there, though it be not seene: namely, An vnfeigned griefe for the want of faith, with an vncessant indeavour for the attaining of it. Againe, A reverent esteeme of God, and heartie affection of vnfeigned loue to him, which cannot be without some former apprehension of Gods

Gods love to them, which is in many, (though they see it not). And lastly, A tender Conscience, fearing to displease God, even in smaller matters, which others little regard. Whosoever shall find these fruits, (which cannot come but from faith) may certainly know, that there is a roote of faith grounded in their hearts, though they see it not. But such as haue no feeling of their faith, and see no such effects in their liues, haue iust cause to thinke that they haue no faith at all.

As for the other sort, who are too well perswaded of themselves, that they finde comfort in meditating on Gods promises, whereas indeed they deceiue themselves, and haue not that faith they imagine, as their fruits doe shew.

This may be discerned by these notes;

First, True comfort is vsually

4. A tender conscience.

No fruits,  
no faith.

Notes of  
true and  
false com-  
fort.

1. True; it  
hardly got.

ly very hardly gotten, with much prayer and labour, and it is oft a long time before this be felt; therefore they who vpon their first thoughts on these promises, finde comfort that they haue part in them, may so farre mistrust, all is not sound, till they shall see some better prooffe thereof: which if they doe not, but for all this will be confident, that all is well, it is to be feared, their comfort is not sound.

2. Feare of  
deceit.

For this is another propertie of that true comfort which springs from faith, especially in young and weake beleevers, that they (so highly vallowing the benefit,) are very fearefull of being deceived, and must see good evidence, before they will be perswaded, that they haue this saving faith.

3. Poore  
in spirit,  
mourne,  
and lowly.

Whereof if they shall be perswaded, yet therewithall is ioy-  
such a feeling of the weakenesse  
of

of their faith, and so of all grace, as makes them poore in their owne eyes, and mourne for their wants, thinking lowly of themselves, and more highly reverencing the graces of God in others. Whereas they who be deceived, are as the *Laodiceans*, rich and wanting nothing, and so be merry, and too light hearted, thinking too well of themselves, and too slenderly of others, better then themselves.

Another sure marke of sensible faith and comfort, is this; That they that haue tasted of it, can never be satisfied, but still hunger and labour for more: none more diligently vse all good meanes to grow in grace then they: Even as the strong and most healthfull bodie, doth feed better then the weake and sickly. But such as being well satisfied with that they haue, and feele no hunger, nor labour for more, it is evident their faith and

4 Hunger and labour for more.

5. Answerable obedience,

and comfort are not good.

To proceed, and not to gather all that might be added hereto, this shall serue for all; That as like fire, like heate; so like faith, like life, great or small. So that where there is strong faith, there must needs be great obedience, and therefore whosoever he be that is carelesse of his conuersion, and barren in the fruits of a holy life, his faith must needs be weake, if not dead.

Wherefore to conclude, I advise every one, who by these markes shall discern himselfe to be deceived, with fancie instead of faith; to goe about this worke more seriously, and to lay a better foundation of faith, and not to say, he hath found comfort, till he can bring good witnesse thereof. Which whosoever shall neglect, shall in the end (to say no more) lament his folly, when he who seeing his error, shall more carefully and con-

constantly put in practise this  
maine dutie of daily feeding vp-  
on *Christ*, shall grow in grace,  
and attaine to that blessed life  
here, wher eof we speake,  
besides eternall life,  
the full reward  
of all his  
labours.  
(:.)

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**FINIS.**

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difficulties in the life.

and you in this  
 state of daily  
 on earth, shall grow in grace  
 and attain to the blessed life  
 here, where we live  
 better than in  
 the world to come  
 of all his  
 labours

(2)

FINIS

